

Young Somalis' social identity in Sweden and Britain. The interplay of group dynamics, socio-political environments, and transnational ties in social identification processes

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Abstract

In this article, we aim to contribute to the literature on social identification among migrants and minorities by offering a theoretical framework that accounts for the interplay of socio-psychological factors, local and transnational group dynamics, and the socio-political environment in which migrants live. This approach enables us to analyse not only the political significance of identity, but also the psychology of identity formation. Drawing upon qualitative data, we analyse how young Somalis (N: 43) living in the municipalities of Malmö (Sweden) and Ealing (United Kingdom) construct and negotiate their ethnic social identities in relation to: Somali elders living in the same city; Somalis in Somalia and in the diaspora; and the British/Swedish majority society. We show that, to secure a positive self-identity vis-à-vis these referent groups, young Somalis engage in psychological strategies of separation; social competition; and social creativity. The socio-political environment in which they are embedded influences which strategy they adopt.

Keywords

Social identity; socio-political context; transnationalism; young Somali; Sweden; United Kingdom; Narratives

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1. Introduction

Decades of migration have changed the landscape of Western European cities, many of which are now more ethnically and religiously heterogeneous than ever and described as 'super-diverse' (Vertovec 2007; Alba and Foner 2015). Young people of migrant heritage constitute a growing proportion of urban youth today. For instance, in the United Kingdom (UK), more than a quarter (27%) of the population under 30 years old identified as non-British in 2011 (ONS 2012). In Sweden, almost a quarter (24%) of the population between 0 and 34 years old is of foreign background (SCB 2015). As this cohort is reaching the ages of labour-force entry, family formation and civic participation, some people see them as outsiders to the society in which they live (Waters and Kasinitz, 2012). At best, they are seen as 'in between' their parents' and the majority society's cultures. In the most negative depictions, their alleged marginality is interpreted as an indicator of their unwillingness to integrate in the majority society.

At the core of these issues are questions about social identity and belonging and the multiple ways in which these are constructed and negotiated by young individuals of migrant descent. This article uses semi-structured interviews and focus groups with young Somalis living in Ealing, London (UK) and Malmö (Sweden) and analyses the representations of their social identity as 'Somalis'¹ in a comparative framework. We draw upon social psychology and political sociology and try to contextualise which psychological strategies young Somalis engage with when they represent their Somali social identity.

In line with a Social Identity approach (Tajfel 1978; 1982; Tajfel and Turner 1979; 1986; Hopkins 2011), we argue that young Somalis construct their social identity by comparing themselves with in- and out-group members. In this article, we analyse how young Somalis represent their social identity through comparisons with: Somali elders living in the same city; Somalis in Somalia and in the diaspora; and the majority society. In striving to construct a positive image of their social self vis-à-vis these groups, young Somalis engage in psychological strategies of separation from the out-group; of social creativity; or of social competition. These strategies are not used randomly, however. Drawing from the research that analyses how the socio-political context can influence the constitution of minorities'

¹ The research participants discussed 'Somali' identity as a marker of ethnic and cultural identity. None of the interviewees explicitly referred to national markers of identification (e.g. Somalilander or Puntlander) and they discussed clan identities as insignificant to them. In the article, we therefore understand 'Somali identity' as the expression of an ethnic identity (see also Fangen 2007).

collective identity (Koopmans et al. 2005; Odmalm 2005), we provide a contextualised assessment of the participants' social identity representations and negotiations. We show that the degree to which the Swedish and British integration policies and discursive constructions of immigrants can influence which psychological strategies are adopted by young Somalis in developing their self-constructions.

This article contributes to existing research on identity by providing a contextualised understanding of the psychological mechanisms that underpin minorities' social identity constructions. This adds to the literature in social psychology on the topic, which tends to see social identity formation as the result of intra-group dynamics and often ignores the mediating role of the socio-political context in which groups are embedded. Vice-versa, the article also contributes to the research in political sociology on minorities' identity that often does not account for the psychological strategies that are used by group members to react to negative representations of or threats to their social identity. As such, our article grounds socio-psychological processes of social identity formation in national and transnational/diasporic socio-political environments and social relations. Further, we contribute to existing research on minorities' identity by comparing how young Somalis represent their social identity in Sweden and Britain. The comparative lens adopted here enables us to assess which expressions of social identity are influenced by states' migrant integration discourses and policies, and which are the result of intra-group dynamics.

In the following, we first present the analytical framework that informs our study. We review and integrate the relevant literature in social psychology and political sociology that pays attention to social identity formations. We suggest that the psychological mechanisms used by group members to represent their identity are influenced by real and symbolic constraints and opportunities created by the socio-political environment for migrant and minority groups. Second, we describe the main characteristics of the Swedish and British political environments. We then present the data and methods of analysis. In the following section, we compare the representations of young Somalis' social identity in Sweden and Britain. We conclude the article by highlighting the importance of adopting a more nuanced understanding of social identity construction that looks at the interplay of social psychological factors, local and transnational group dynamics, and the political environment.

2. Social identity: contextualising psychological strategies

A Social Identity approach is among the most prominent frameworks of analysis used in social psychology to study collective identities. A social identity involves a person's 'knowledge of his membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to the membership' (Tajfel 1981, 255). The markers of social identities are defined from the in-group members' comparisons with relevant out-groups along valued dimensions and people will differentiate between groups in ways that favour their ingroup (Tajfel and Turner 1979; 1986; Tajfel 1978; 1982).

Low-status groups², such as women in a sexist society or ethnic minorities in a racist world, are subject to devaluations by high-status groups, something that can affect their members' positive self-esteem (Tajfel and Turner 1986; Abrams et al. 2005). Low-status group members can adopt several psychological strategies to respond to such devaluations and they can act collectively to improve their situation. They can accept and internalise such hierarchies and choose not to engage with the society of settlement. In this instance, low-status group members will separate themselves from society at large and focus on preserving their group's characteristics (Tajfel and Turner 1986). In the context of multicultural societies, this often translates into minority groups limiting contact and participation with the majority society and embracing non-adaptive strategies to negotiate their social identity (Berry 1997). Alternatively, low-status groups may reevaluate an ostensibly negative characteristic as positive or identify an alternative dimension on which the group is superior ('social creativity'). The 'Black is beautiful' movement is an example of social creativity as it called for the positive redefinition of black social identity while the salient axis of differentiation -skin colour - remains the same (Tajfel 1978). Another example of social creativity is the low-status group's engagement in imagining the high-status group's social identity so that it includes some of the low-status group's features. In multicultural societies, this is expressed in the creativity of ethnic/racial minorities to envisage a national identity that recognises both their group's specificities and their identification with the country of settlement (Hopkins 2011). This dual identity, as any other social identity, must be socially validated by the majority society. As such, the degree to which the development of a dual identity is a feasible psychological strategy to respond to devaluations, is mediated by the

² 'Status' refers to the group's relative position on some evaluative comparators, and not socio-economic status (Tajfel & Turner 1986).

socio-political environment in which low-status groups operate, as we will discuss below. A third strategy low-status groups can engage with to respond to status hierarchies is to adopt socially competitive strategies such as antagonism and open hostility towards the high-status group (Tajfel and Turner 1979).

Social identity representations are strongly influenced by both intra- and inter-group dynamics and comparisons (Verkuyten 1997; 2005; Deaux 2006; Jenkins 2008). In the case of multicultural societies, the society of settlement is an important out-group for the representation of ethnic minority group members' social identity (Koopmans et al. 2005; Hopkins 2011; Ozyurt 2013). It delineates what distinguishes someone as e.g. 'British' or 'Swedish' and as such determines the criteria for inclusion in or exclusion from its community. In this respect, it is important to understand not only the characteristics of the majority group's social identity, but also the discursive and institutional structures that create opportunities and constraints for minority groups. We will return to this point.

Group members can also derive a sense of social identity from comparisons with other ingroup members. For instance, family members and community elders are important referent groups as they instill in young people the values, customs, and ideals of their ethnic, national or religious background, thereby creating symbolic boundaries that define the group (Verkuyten 2005; Schoenpflug 2008; Gouldbourne et al. 2010; Schneider et al. 2012). People can also construct their social identity in relation to members of the ingroup who are geographically distant. In the context of migrant minorities, the multi-stranded relations between sending and receiving countries and with the diaspora have complex implications for the definition of young people's social identity. These relations have often been overlooked in social psychology (see however Bathia 2008; Verkuyten 2005), but sociological research suggests that the country of origin (one's own or the parents') can provide a sense of mooring and rootedness (Bash et al. 1994; Levitt 2001; Waldinger 2015; Reynolds 2011). Similarly, belonging to a diasporic community can promote a feeling of kinship with other people scattered around the globe (Dufoix 2008). Young migrants in Europe, in constructing their social identity, compare themselves with transnational and diasporic communities. In these comparisons, young migrants develop psychological strategies that enable them to construct a cohesive narrative about belonging to their ethnic group vis-à-vis the understandings of social identity developed by people at 'home' or in the diaspora.

One of the key assumptions of this article is that social identities are not just the result of group comparisons. The socio-political context in which a group operates influences that group's social identity. In particular, the settlement state's integration policies, notions of national identity, and classification of immigrants influence migrants' social identities in at least two ways. First, it offers status categories of identification that indicate specific constructions of the relations between immigrants and the settlement society (Koopmans et al. 2005; Odmalm 2005; Deaux 2006; Statham & Tillie 2016; van Heelsum & Koomen 2016). The status categories offered in our case studies vary significantly. In Britain, the 'minority' category predominates while in Sweden the dominant vocabulary favours the category of *invandrare* (Eng.: immigrant). Second, the receiving state can adopt integration policies that either favour conformity to a single cultural model shared by all citizens, or that support culturally pluralist conceptions³. The logics of these two models mediate migrants' claims to national identification (Koopmans et al. 2005; Ozyurt 2013). Insistence to conform to a single cultural model could limit migrants' opportunities to develop dual identifications with the majority and the minority groups, while policies and discourses that seek to retain and promote cultural heterogeneity may have the opposite effect (Odmalm 2005; Ozyurt 2013; Dovidio et al. 2015). Sweden and Britain have historically adopted inclusive rights for migrants and minorities and they have done so through 'multicultural' policies (Koopmans et al. 2012). Their approach to multiculturalism varies, however. Britain has tended to recognise and represent racial and ethnic minority identities in the public sphere (Modood 2009). Sweden has instead provided migrants with generous access to rights while fossilising clear differences between the recipient society and immigrant communities (Odmalm 2005). In the following section, we present in greater detail the socio-political contexts in which the studies' participants live and operate, emphasising how those can influence which psychological strategies are adopted by young Somalis as they negotiate their social identity.

3. National contexts

In this section, we focus on Britain's and Sweden's migrant integration paradigms and the categorisation of migrants used in policy and public discourses. We also present the general socioeconomic status of their Somali populations in both case studies. The section aims

³ Other institutional and legal elements, such as citizenship policies, may affect identification and behaviour, (Koopmans et al. 2005). Here we focus on the institutional structures that young Somalis directly engage with or are affected by. We do not include citizenship legislation as the participants had either naturalised at a young age with their parents, or they acquired Swedish or British citizenship at birth. They had not proactively naturalised, which is an indicator of socio-cultural integration in some countries (Ersanilli & Koopmans 2010).

primarily to provide contextual background for the article's findings and analysis presented later.

The Swedish approach to migrant integration, often described as pluralist and 'multicultural' (Koopmans et al. 2012), is built upon the integrative logics of a Scandinavian model of welfare state, advocating standardised institutional arrangements and rules that apply equally to all citizens (Borevi 2014). The main objective has historically been to minimise inequalities between native and migrant populations by means of centralised corporatist policies. Migrants in Sweden enjoy similar socio-economic and political rights to natives, and they have been enabled to preserve their culture and language. These rights were intended to provide migrants with the resources to maintain their cultures, rather than providing exemptions from the law on cultural or religious ground. Migrant organisations have been financially supported by the state, but have played a marginal role in the Swedish civic and political life as they had to meet criteria whereby they could not have political or religious interests. This has *de facto* turned them into cultural associations and has constrained their ability to act as service organisation aiding their conationals (Schierup & Karlsson 1991; Carlson et al. 2012). Participation in the labour market has always been a pivotal marker of migrants' integration in society (Borevi 2014; Scuzzarello 2015). Integration policies, coupled with the strong state's involvement in organising migrant lives and associational activities, have contributed to the establishment of symbolic boundary markers between the native majority, representing normality, and *invandrarna* whose ways of being are at best exoticised and at worse defined as a problem. This is reflected in the institutionalisation of cultural differences between the two, and the representation of the 'Swedish way of life' as the most common and desirable vis-à-vis a 'non-Swedish' way which becomes a deviation from the norm (Odmalm 2005; Dahlsted & Hertzberg 2007).

Britain has adopted a more individualistic and market-oriented approach to migrants' integration compared to the Swedish corporatist patterns. This approach, based on a 'race relations' model which was first introduced in the 1960s, relies on strong anti-discrimination legislation, especially in the labour market, which provides equal opportunities to combat discrimination that prevents individual equality of opportunity. The British race relations legislations do not provide minority rights as such, but rather allow - via the extension of anti-discrimination claims to different groups through individual test cases - recognition to groups able to identify themselves as a publicly identified 'racial' group (Koopmans et al.

2005). The British multicultural framework that has evolved from race relations, recognises ethno-racial groups as public identities and allows groups to retain much of their cultural difference from the majority society. Recognition does not extend to religious groups, however. The lack of recognition for Muslims as a discriminated group within race relations, has contributed to the proactive political mobilisation of British Muslims (Statham et al. 2005). Living in a country with which they identify as much as other ethnic minorities (O'Toole & Gale 2013), Muslims feel aggrieved and respond assertively by making demands on a state which they perceive relegates them to a 'second class' status in the national community. Muslims' perceived grievances have worsened as Britain moved towards a policy paradigm that emphasises community cohesion and as the state intensified the surveillance of Muslim communities due to anti-radicalisation policies (Grillo 2007).

Both countries host a sizeable Somali community, summarised in Table 1 in relation to the total population. As of 2016, there were 95.960 people in Sweden who were either born in Somalia or whose parents were born in Somalia, up from 57.752 in 2011 (SCB). The Somali population in Sweden has grown significantly since 2012 following a decision by the Migration Court which eases the requirements for family reunification (MIG 2012:1). This means that today Sweden hosts one of the largest Somali communities in Europe, together with Britain. The 2011 census estimates that 99.484 people of Somali descent live in Britain (ONS 2012). It is difficult to provide exact figures for how many British Somalis live in the UK, as 'British Somali' is not an ethnic category used in the 2011 census. Thus, it is likely that the real numbers are higher. Somalis arrived in Sweden and the UK at different times. The Somali community in Sweden first arrived as asylum seekers in the 1990s following the collapse of Siad Barre's regime. The migration patterns of Somalis to Britain is more diverse as they first arrived as merchant seamen in the 19th century. In the 1960s, most came as economic migrants or dependants and from the 1980s, they primarily came to the UK as refugees (Open Society 2014). In addition, there are more recent arrivals of Somalis to the UK from other European countries (Carlson et al. 2012; van Liempt 2011).

TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Somalis' socioeconomic conditions in Sweden and Britain are similar. In both countries Somali communities tend to be clustered in city neighbourhoods with higher than average levels of deprivation, crime, unemployment and minimal services and amenities. This also applies to the participants in our research. The employment rates among Somalis in both

countries are lower than the national average, indicating issues with labour market integration leading to long term unemployment (Carlson et al. 2012; Kahn 2008). Levels of education within the community are also relatively low, and Somali children in both countries have been consistently at the bottom of achievement tables compared to other minority groups, suggesting potential problems of integration in the education system (Sporton & Valentine 2007; REFERENCE REMOVED). Policy makers we interviewed in both municipalities consider the Somali community problematic:

Somalis, because of a whole range of factors [...] have difficulties to integrate in the society, get a job and be independent (Study 1, Malmö, POL1⁴).

I think there are some [communities] that slip under the radar. At the moment the Somali community has sort of drifted in the last 5 – 10 years and the population is steadily growing (Study 1, Ealing, POL1)

Policy actors mention high unemployment rates, risks for engaging in criminal activities, radicalisation, urban self-segregation, and tribalism as perceived reasons for Somalis' lack of integration.

4. Data and method

This study draws from interviews and focus groups with 43 young Somalis living in Malmö and Ealing. The data was collected in two research projects studying migrants' social identification and integration in Britain and Sweden⁵. The studies asked similar questions regarding social identification and they collected data with the same cohort (people of Somali descent aged 18-29), at the same time (2012-2013). The participants include both young adults who were born in Somalia or in refugee camps in neighbouring countries and who arrived in Europe before they reach teen-age ('1.5 generation') and those who were born in Europe ('2nd generation'). The two groups grew up exposed to the influences of their families and immigrant communities and they have been socialised into the majority society's culture through the education system and relations with peers and other minority groups. Also, the 1.5 and 2nd generations in Malmö and Ealing have been influenced by poor socioeconomic characteristics of the immediate neighbourhoods in which they live. Because of these shared experiences, for analytic purposes we consider the respondents as belonging to one group of

⁴ Extracts are labelled by study, city and participant's pseudonym.

⁵ [REF STUDY 1; REF STUDY 2]

‘young Somalis’.⁶ We appreciate that Somalia’s political divisions may have fostered new political identities in Somalia and may also affect the identification of some Somali emigrants. However, as ‘Somali’ is the marker around which most Somalis, especially younger ones, mobilise in the societies of settlement, we decided to take it as unit of analysis rather than national-political identities.

The data consists of 17 semi-structured interviews with young Somalis conducted in Ealing and in Malmö; and six focus groups conducted in Malmö with 26 young Somalis.

Participants in both studies were recruited in language schools, ethnic/national associations and through snowballing. Table 2 summarises the sample’s demographic characteristics.

TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The article’s first author or trained, language competent research assistants carried out the one-hour long interviews. They were set up with identical thematic questions in Sweden and the UK, and looked at: self-identification (open question); identification with Sweden/ UK; identification with Somalia; and relationships with other Somalis in Sweden/ UK and in the diaspora. The second author mediated the six focus groups, divided by gender, with the aid of a translator. The semi-structured sessions lasted between 1.5 and 2 hours. The moderator asked the participants about self-identification; relationship with the majority society; relationship and allegiance to the Somali diaspora; the importance of Somalia for their identification; and perceived discrimination. With permission of the participants, we recoded the interviews and focus groups. We guaranteed anonymity to all participants. Although modest in size, the sample enable us to gain a certain understanding of young Somalis’ social identity constructions. The sample is obviously not representative.

We are aware that our professional role, gender, and ethnic background had an impact on the participants’ responses. For instance, most of them were reluctant to discuss issues of discrimination and racism. When mentioned, we invited the participants to discuss these issues further which has allowed us to reach some understanding of their perceived discrimination. Our outsider role to the group studied could pose some limitations to the research. We have address this by employing, when possible, Somali interviewers. This might have helped the participants to feel more at ease during the interview situation.

⁶ There are differences between the 1.5 and 2nd generations. Among others, the overall length of exposure to the influences of the majority society and the experience of displacement and migration. The effects of these factors will vary depending on the age at time of arrival.

We have analysed the data using a narrative interpretative approach of how people see themselves as group members (Hammack 2011). The participants' narratives offer an insight into how they make sense of themselves and of their positions in the social world. Narratives also suggest the participants' views of what is canonical and of what defines, in their perspective, a 'true' Somali. We analyse the data by identifying recurring referent groups the participants compare themselves to when presenting their social identity. We identify three main referent groups: Somali elders living in Ealing/Malmö; the Somali diasporic and transnational community; and the majority society (Brits/Swedes). The participants recognise Islam as a cornerstone of their self-identification (Berns McGowan 1999; Valentine et al. 2009; Abdi 2015; Liberatore 2016). Given our focus on the referent groups that young Somalis compare themselves to when defining their social identity, we refer to Islam only to the degree to which it is mentioned by the participants as a theme within narratives of intergenerational relations; of relationships with the societies of settlement; and of belonging to the homeland and to the diaspora. As such, we discuss the significance of a British Muslim identity but analyse it not in relation to a broader 'Islam-ness', but in relation to Britain and Britishness. To account for the potential influence of the socio-political environment, we singled out references to integration policies; categorisation of immigrants; and public discourses and attitudes about immigrants. The study adopts a cross-national comparative research design. We compare the participants' narratives of social identity and how they negotiate their Somalis identification in relation to Somali elders; Somalis in the diaspora and in Somalia; and the Swedish/British majority society. This comparative approach enables us to gauge the degree to which the psychological strategies used to try to change social hierarchies are influenced by the environment in which young Somalis live.

5. Findings

Our studies' participants represented their social identity by drawing comparisons to predominantly three referent groups: Somali elders living in the same city and with whom the participants engage daily; their transnational extended families both in Somalia and in the diaspora and with whom the participants have sporadic contact; and the majority society. Below, we compare how the participants construct their social identity in relation to these referent groups in Malmö and Ealing.

Inter-generational differences

The participants in both cities consistently refer to the differences between older and younger Somalis. In comparing themselves to the older generation, young Somalis acknowledge that the latter is a high-status group, with power to control and regulate.

In the Somali culture, if someone sees you going to a club, if an older man or woman and sometimes even the younger ones see you, they'll call your house and say "I saw X going to a club. It's not good, it's not good" [. . .] if people know you for these things, people won't respect you, you'll lose a lot of reputation (Study 1, Anwar, Ealing)

Anwar suggests that to challenge the elders' discursive construction of the group's collective identity is risky and could have implications for one's reputation. Those who do not conform to the predominant understanding of 'proper' Somali behaviour can be controlled and excluded by other, often older, Somalis. Some young Somalis in Ealing deal with this by alienating themselves from the local Somali community. Amun, for example, who works in Ealing, admits she is happy that her family lives South London.

I know I'm working [in Ealing] but I don't . . . I wouldn't want to live here because . . . I don't know...I want to get out of it, get out from here. It's nice to see other [Somali] people around me [. . .] but...here it's too much for me, too many people who know your business ... it's too close. (Study 1, Amun, Ealing)

Other participants characterise their social identity in ways that distinguish them from the older generation. In Ealing, some suggest that the elders are psychologically living in the country of origin:

The older generation has failed to get a grip of society. My mum is a perfect example. She's been here for 20 years, and still can't speak fluent English. (Study 1, Amaal, Ealing)

Others argue that older Somalis in Ealing are attached to customs and norms that originate from their life in Somalia, as for instance tribalism:

This [Somali] community cannot integrate, we cannot move forward unless there is integration and cohesion within ourselves. [...] we are getting there [away from tribalism], and this is coming from the younger generation. The older generation... their brain is... stuck in their own way. (Study 1, Anwar, Ealing)

In contrast, young Somalis in Ealing describe themselves as well integrated in British society and they often identify as British as well as Somalis. We will analyse this component of their social identity in greater detail later.

While young Somalis in Ealing identify as British, which is an important inter-generational demarcation and differentiates them from allegedly poorly integrated elders, by contrast,

young Somalis in Malmö emphasise two main generational differences: one relates to gender relations and one to faith. One male participant says that:

[Young Somali] men and women can sit together and discuss things, chat... (Study 2, Ali, Malmö)

Ali suggests that young Somalis in Sweden have a different outlook on gender relations and that friendships between young men and women are common. These type of friendships, in Ali's opinion, are not common among his parents. The second difference that the Swedish participants speak about concerns religion, as Mariam explains:

There is a younger generation in Sweden who has become much more practising Muslims, who have taken faith to a different level which was not... which is not like in Somalia, I don't think. [...] and it's exciting to see this younger generation who behaves completely differently, who searches knowledge [about Islam] in a different way than the older generation did. (Study 2, Mariam, Malmö)

Mariam suggests that faith is more important to young Somalis than it is to older Somalis. Islam proves to be a stable identity in the face of a constantly changing world and young Somalis can easily identify with it and actively search information about it.

Young people of migrant background, in constructing their social identity, relate to and negotiate with the dominant narratives developed and maintained by elders which outline their community's norms and obligations. The psychological strategy the participants engage with to achieve a positive distinctiveness from Somali elders is one of social creativity. In both Sweden and Britain they present new characteristics of what it means to be 'Somali' that distinguish them from Somali elders. In Ealing, the participants juxtapose themselves to allegedly traditional and non-integrated older Somalis. Young Somalis in contrast express belonging to British society. In Malmö, young Somalis re-examine and strengthen their Muslim identity rather than their clan-based one that is significant for the first generation (see Björk 2007), in addition to embracing more 'Western' behaviours such as having mixed-gender friendships. The inter-generational differences illustrated above could be partly due to generational cleavages and that young people do not agree with their parents' view of the world. In the context of migration, this may also have to do with young people introducing new ways of doing things that contrast with the older generation's understandings of the group's values and appropriate behaviour. This is not to say that young migrants' representations of their social identity are always more progressive than their parents'. Rather, our point is that young Somalis engage in reframing stories about their collective self

that end up differing from their parents'. It is also important to underline that the deployment of oppositional comparisons with the first generation does not mean that the daily interactions between young and older Somalis are only characterised by divisions. Indeed, several participants emphasised how, when the needs arise, Somalis are supportive of each other as 'Somalis':

Question: Do you think Somalis in Malmö are united?

Answer: Somalis are Somalis, we are from the same country. Regardless of which tribe we belong to, we speak the same language (Study 1, Fathia, Malmö)

I think being really close knitted [is the main strength of the Somali community]. I think it's quite negative sometimes whereby being so closely knitted everyone knows everyone else's business but at the same times that also by knowing everyone's business you can look out for people easier and no one is ever completely isolated. I think that's the [emphasis] key strength. (Study 1, Mary, Ealing)

Transnational connections: 'home' and the diaspora

People who are part of a diasporic group, like Somalis, form and negotiate their social identity in relation to their, or their parents', homeland. Respondents in both cities consistently refer to Somalia as 'home' regardless of whether they have ever been there, or whether they have been back since they were children. Most describe Somalia as a wonderful country before it was torn up by the war. For instance, Anwar recollects his first visit to Mogadishu in 11 years in the following way:

My family and my mum would show me pictures and videos of when they were there [in Somalia] and where they would go. The capital city used to be the most beautiful city I've seen, even more beautiful than London [...] it was beautiful but I was also aware of the civil war going on [...] I was expecting [Mogadishu] to be in a worse state but not everything was destroyed [...] I've never experienced the fresh air I have experienced in Somalia, the best fresh air, it was so good. At the same time, the food there...in my experience I couldn't find it in any other country. The best food fresh, whatever you want, meat... everything is fresh, whatever you want they'll make it in front of you. (Study 1, Anwar, Ealing)

To young Somalis, Somalia is a spiritual and cultural home that provides them with deep-rooted identification and emotional attachment. It informs a story in their construction of self-identity about knowing where they come from. They grew up hearing stories of 'home', a distant place from where they are living now, fuelling a mythology of return:

It's important to keep a Somali identity, to work on it. It's because we [Somalis] are dreaming of going back. Parents pass on the language, food, symbols, traditions... in the hope of coming back. Or at least so that their children will one day go back and rebuild Somalia. (Study 1, Omar, Ealing)

Omar, who was 24 years old at the time of the interview, has not been back to Somalia since he was nine. Yet, several times during the interview he expresses a strong desire to return to Somalia, saying that if he managed to pursue his dream he would “kiss the ground as soon as I get off the plane”.

The ways in which young Somalis relate to their ‘homeland’ and its people bring into sharp relief the complexities intrinsic to social identity negotiations. Even though the idea of Somalia as an idealised, emotional ‘home’ plays an important role in the narration of young Somalis’ sense of self, it is rarely seen as part of their future. When asked if they would move to Somalia, most participants were hesitant.

In 15 years... I’d probably like to have a house in Somalia. But I’d still need my house in London. One foot in, one foot out. A holiday destination but come back to reality (Study 1, Khalid, Ealing)

The main reason why they would not move to Somalia is not the lack of security, but cultural differences. Although they refer to Somalia as their ‘homeland’, most participants are aware that they do not fit there. Basr’s experience illustrates this. A 24 years-old woman who left Somalia when she was two, Basr retains an interest in Somalia and is one of the few interviewees who wants to move back even though she feels she does not fully fit in:

Their [Somalis’] expectations sometimes made me feel stupid. When you can’t eat with your hands properly, when you can’t use the toilets that you have to squat down on, when you understand 100% what they’re saying but you get stuck with the words to express yourself properly. (Study 1, Basr, Ealing)

Basr realises that in the eyes of people in Somalia she is regarded as ‘westerner’, and that this is seen negatively, as Ubah confirms.

They [in Somalia] feel that we’re more Westerner, they use it in a derogatory manner, that we’ve lost our culture and that we do things that are not allowed in our culture and religion (Study 1, Ubah, Ealing)

The participants’ Somali identity is questioned by family and friends in Somalia. Furthermore, the encounter with their Somali family in the homeland made some participants acutely aware of their European identity.

[When I visited Somalia] is when it really hit me, I saw myself as British Somali. (Study 1, Khalid, Ealing)

I feel more Swedish in Somalia than I have ever done in Sweden. I was living in Somalia for one year and then I really, really felt like a Swede. And people called me ‘the Swedish girl’ and that’s how I felt. (Study 2, Amina, Malmö)

While the participants look Somali, and are therefore ‘insiders’ to Somali society, their accent, gestures, dress-code position them as ‘outsiders’ to the local community and their British or Swedish identity surfaces to become central to their self-definition⁷.

The diaspora is another important point of reference for young Somalis. The participants frequently construct their social identity in opposition to their peers living in other countries. By doing this, they engage in a strategy of social competition that favours their in-group as Somalis in Sweden or Britain respectively. In the UK, young Somalis suggest that Somalis living elsewhere in the West are culturally closer to their society of settlement, more blasé about Somali customs and ways of living.

They do behave differently in the way that they seem more integrated into their Dutch culture [...] I’d say I’m well integrated in the mainstream [UK] society but I still keep my cultural identity [...] whereas them, they’ve integrated [...] and if you’d say ‘who are you’, they’d say ‘Dutch’ first. (Study 1, Khalid, Ealing)

Khalid claims that young Somalis in the Netherlands are not as close to their Somali identity as British Somalis are. To him they identify primarily as ‘Dutch’. Basr recalls meeting her cousin who lives in Canada:

My cousin came to my house and she walks into the house in a miniskirt and we are looking at her like ‘are you serious?’ shocked and scandalised. And the funny thing is that we were raised here [in the UK], we know that people do this, we know it’s normal, we have friends who do it, and up until a certain age we did it, but I feel [that] to a certain point you’re not Somali if you’re doing that. (Study 1, Basr, Ealing)

To Basr, her cousin’s dress code is not a reaction against traditional Somali norms but rather the indication that she had fully adopted a Canadian life-style and that she is oblivious of what being Somali is about. In comparison, young British Somalis say that their parents have been very strict about teaching them about Somali culture and identity, in the hope they may one day return.

Young Somalis in Sweden also positively distinguish themselves from Somalis in the diaspora, particularly those living in the UK.

In the UK they’re more religious. Many Somalis there wear *jilbabs* and so. And at the same time there are many who are not religious at all. There are many over there who are religious and have double standards. One day they behave religiously and the other they

⁷ It should be noted that, despite the cognitive dissimilation observed in this article, Somalis are strongly involved in transnational activism aiming to alleviate poverty in Somalia (Hammond 2013).

don't. When it comes to language, I think it's them [Somalis in the UK] who don't know the language. We have language tuitions in Scandinavia. Somalis who live here can speak their language very well (Study 1, Maka, Malmö)

To Maka, Somalis in Britain are more religious, partly because of what is perceived to be a stronger acceptance of Islam in Britain. She questions their religiosity, however, and suggests their behaviour is hypocritical. Maka also indicates that the institutional structure of opportunity in Sweden, which provides children of migrant background with free language tuitions at school, enables Somalis to speak their language better. Somalis elsewhere do not benefit from this and are therefore less fluent in Somali.

There is a significant difference between how young Somalis in Sweden and the UK represent their social identity in relation to people in Somalia and to the diaspora. In relation to their kin in Somalia, the participants in both countries seem to accept their low-status group position. They respect the Somali society's understanding of 'Somali' ethnic identity, but they do not seem fully able to engage with it and are aware of their ambiguous position as insiders and outsiders to Somali society. This seems to create a cognitive distance between the participants and the people in the Somalia, expressed in young European Somalis increased awareness of the Swedish and British components of their social identity. As a result, to some participants Somalia becomes a place where to spend vacations, for then going back to their 'reality' in Europe. The participants' relation to the diaspora is different. Young Somalis in both cities adopt a high-status position vis-à-vis their peers in the diaspora. Their social identity construction developed in comparison with the diaspora is underpinned by a psychological strategy of social competition which is expressed in the desire to claim cultural, moral, and linguistic authenticity. They legitimise their position relative to the diaspora with reference to the socio-political contexts in which they live and which enables them to be more 'truly' Somali by being more fluent in Somali (in Sweden) or knowing Somali culture better (in Britain).

Young Somalis and the majority society

Our data suggests that the British socio-political context has facilitated the development of young Somalis' collective identification that includes a sense of being British, as illustrated below.

I have two identities, I'm Somali first, by blood and then I'm British after that. I know both cultures very,very,very well and I've adapted very well to this country [...] I can now

switch between being Somali when I'm at home or to be British when I'm out and about. (Study 1, Omar, Ealing)

I'd probably say I'm Muslim first, then Somali, then British. [...] Because I'm more of a hybrid of the two cultures Rather than just being one. At times [Somali and British] or a joint first, at times when I'm watching a football game you could say I'm more British, but then at other times you could say I'm more Somali than British. (Study 1, Amun, Ealing)

Young Somalis can switch between cultural frames and languages depending on the situation: they can be Somali in the home's private sphere and British in the public domain, as said by Omar. In the context of British multiculturalism, young Somalis have been able to define their own identities and thus find a space to identify with the mainstream.

In Ealing, culture and religion define what you do, how you do it. I think it has a lot to do with British society allowing multiculturalism. (Study 1, Basr, Ealing)

To identify as British is something that taps on young Somalis' sense of civic identity.

I'm Muslim first, second thing I'm Somali and third thing I'm British. Because Somali is my origin and my origin is more important than my citizenship. My faith and my belief is Islam, my origin is Somali and my citizenship is British. (Study 1, Anwar, Ealing)

Anwar suggests that the category of 'British' provides him and other young Somalis with rights and obligations that make them feel part of the British national community (REFERENCE REMOVED). This sense of identification with Britain does not necessarily result from in-depth contacts with the majority society.

The thing is I don't gravitate towards English people, not in a bad way but my friends are from everywhere and most of them were born and raised here but aren't necessarily white Caucasian English people. (Study 1, Amun, Ealing)

Amun, as many other participants in Ealing, indicates that her social network is highly diverse, and that she has not established many close friendships with white British people. Identification with Britain seems to emerge despite experiences of institutional racism. Omar, for instance, recounted after the interview was completed that he had been repeatedly ill-treated by the police. He had been stop-and-searched several times without justifications, spat on and bullied by officers on his way to work or to friends. In his opinion, his skin colour and the stereotypes attached to young black males in the UK explain the police's behaviour. Despite the resistance they face from some segments of the British society, young Somalis have carved a sense of belonging to Britain which to many is "the only home I know, and the only home I can remember", as expressed by Amun.

In Sweden, young Somalis' negotiations of their self-identity in relation to the majority society emphasise the differences between Somalis and Swedes.

When I am there [in Africa] people call me Swede because I haven't lived there in a long time, but when I'm in Sweden I'm an immigrant. I don't really know what my ethnicity is. I cannot feel Somali, like fully Somali, or Swedish [...] the difficult thing is that being Swedish doesn't really mean much to me, most Swedes see me as an immigrant and in the home country they see me as Swede. So I guess I am both. (Study 1, Abukar, Malmö)

Because of the Swedish society's attitudes, Abukar is not comfortable with calling himself Swedish or Somali-Swedish. He is positioned as an immigrant. This echoes other participants' perceptions that multiple identifications as Somalis and Swedes are not validated by native Swedes.

There is no word in Swedish for 'Somali-Swedes' like you have 'African-American' in the US. In Sweden people say 'I'm Swedish' but how do Swedes look like? Are they black or white? (Study 2, Samatar, Malmö)

As soon as I came back to Sweden [from Somalia where she was identified as 'the Swedish girl'] that label 'Swedish' was not clear to me anymore. The rest of society doesn't use it to describe me, so I don't use it either. (Study 2, Amina, Malmö)

The lack of acceptance in the public discourse for a hyphenated identity such as 'African-American', or 'British Somali', excludes young Somalis from being considered Swedish. Also, their blackness automatically positions them as outsiders to the mainstream, and, in their opinion, it makes it difficult for them to be perceived as fellow countrymen by native Swedes. This is exacerbated by perceived discrimination, reported by some respondents.

Abukar: People think that Somalis don't work. Swedes think that Somalis are lazy and live on benefits. The truth is that they [Somalis] try their best. [...] I think that the municipality has failed, or rather that Sweden has failed with integration politics because it is always so that immigrants are exposed, unemployed, criminal and in the media.

Interviewer: Do you feel integrated?

Abukar: No, not at all. (Study 1, Abukar, Malmö)

Abukar, who was 20 years old at the time of the interview, is very vocal about how Somalis and migrants in general are subjected to discrimination, which makes him feel excluded from the Swedish society even though he has lived in Sweden since he was three years old. During the interview, he also said that he had never experienced discrimination first hand. This suggests that the collective experiences of discriminations among the Somali community in

Sweden resonate with the young participants, even if they may not have experienced it directly.

Several participants in Sweden show a high degree of agency in how they negotiate their belonging to the national community. Their perceived lack of inclusion in society seems to lead young Somalis to be defiant about the category of 'Swedish' while in Sweden.

They [Swedes] don't call me 'the Swedish girl' or woman, it's not the first thing they say. And then I won't say it either! It's a revolt! I mean, then I won't use that word either. It's automatic that I call myself Somali. (Study 2, Amina, Malmö)

To Amina not to call herself Swedish is an act of resistance against perceived discrimination and exclusion. While feeling excluded from the Swedish society, in some circumstances they identify as Swedish or Somali-Swedish.

Samtar: If a migrant asks, you can say 'I'm Swedish' but if a white person asks... [Laughs] if a real Swede asks then you don't know what to say.

Moderator: So it depends on the situation, isn't it? What happens if you are in Copenhagen and meet a Somali? Would you say you are Swedish?

Samtar: no, no I'm Somali then

Moderator: and if you are, say, in Berlin and meet a Swede?

Samtar: Well, then at least I can say I'm from Sweden, I do speak the language after all! You also say that you are Somali-Swedish when you meet others, like a Brit in Dubai. (Study 2, Samtar, Malmö)

It's a very conscious choice not to call myself Swedish in Sweden, more so than when I am abroad. Then, when I travel I do so with a Swedish passport, and I never had any other passports! It's clearer to me, easier even, to say that I am Swedish [when I am abroad] than when I'm in Sweden (Study 2, Amina, Malmö)

Typically, the participants enact their Swedish identity if their interlocutor is a fellow migrant or if they are abroad. The category of 'Swede' is therefore significant to young Somalis but it becomes salient in contexts where it is a resource to either underline their differences from other Somalis or similarities with other Europeans.

The comparison between the ways young Somalis in Sweden and Britain construct their Somali social identity in relation to the majority society reveals striking differences. Young Somalis in Ealing are creatively envisioning a social identity that includes commonalities with Britain as well as a sense of minority group distinctiveness. Effectively, they are changing the values assigned by the majority society to Somalis as difficult to integrate and 'slipping under the radar'. The respondents in Ealing portray Somalis as fully able to be British as Somalis and Muslims and in this way, they challenge monolithic understandings of British identity that they encounter in their daily life. The British socio-political context

seems to have influenced their social identity as it has created a pluralist institutional environment where there is a perceived compatibility between minorities and the majority society. Swedish Somalis' social identity also encompasses a sense of identification with the recipient society, but it is expressed primarily when they are abroad as this aspect of their identification is not validated by the Swedish society. Sweden's socio-political context seems to affect young Somalis' social identity as it discourages the formation of multiple identifications that could encompass multiple allegiances and belongings. Discrimination, negative stereotypes about the Somali community in Sweden, and the failure of the majority population to see them as part of society lead young Somalis in Sweden to conclude that their ethnic identity and the majority society's Swedish identity are incompatible. Young Somalis in Sweden, unable to disrupt public discourses that place them as outsiders to society, appear therefore to construct their social identity in antagonism to Swedish society. They react to these positionings and devaluations by seeking positive distinctiveness from the majority society and proactively resist self-identifying as Swedes in Sweden.

6. Conclusions

In recent years, political debates have engaged in sharp discussions about migrants and minority groups as social problems challenging the national unity of the country of residence. In an era of 'superdiversity', migrants' allegiances, and those of their children, is scrutinised as politicians and members of the public question the degree to which migrants identify with their country of origin or with the one they are living in. These arguments often neglect how these people identify themselves. In this article, we have focused on these self-constructions showing that there are differences in the ways young members of the same ethnic group construct their identity and that these differences depend on the socio-political environment they are embedded in.

The data presented in this article shows that young people of migrant descent constantly negotiate their social identity in relation to the society of settlement and to members of the same ethnic group. Our approach, which combines insights from social psychology and political sociology on social identity formation processes among minorities, has enabled us to better understand the processes behind these negotiations. We have shown that young Somalis challenge hierarchies that position them vis-à-vis Somali elders; Somalis in Somalia and in the diaspora; and the recipient society. They do so by tapping in psychological strategies of social competition, social creativity and separation. We have been able to

advance our understanding of social identity constructions by contextualising these findings. First, we have shown that these multiple negotiations are important components of young Somalis' social identity. Second, we have demonstrated that integration policies and discourses about immigrants influence the strategies young Somalis adopt to challenge social hierarchies between them and other referent groups. The different ways that multiculturalism has been adopted in Sweden and Britain brought into relief in the ways in which the research participants construct their social identity in relation to the majority society. In Sweden, migrants have been able to maintain their culture, through for instance mother tongue tuitions at school. At the same time, they have been put under pressure (and largely failed) to enter the labour market to 'integrate' and their way of life has been exoticised in public discourses, *de facto* establishing clear boundaries between native Swedes and *invandrarna*. To respond to this and seek a positive identity, young Somalis seem to have entered into competition with native Swedes. For instance, while they identify as 'Swedish' in some contexts, they refuse to do so in Sweden as this aspect of their social identity is not validated by the majority society. In contrast, the UK seems to provide young Somalis the cultural and political space to be creative in countering the majority society's construction of British identity. They can be British, Somali, and Muslims at the same time, and they express that they can contribute to the British civic and social life, because of their diverse background, not in spite of it. This finding challenges the idea that there needs to be a tension between one's religious, ethnic and national identity. Given a favourable socio-political context, as the British one seems to be, migrants and minorities can develop different, and equally valuable, ways of being part of the society of residence.

In a way, we expected that the socio-political environment would influence minorities' social identity. After all, integration policies define the relation between the native majority society and that society's ethnic and religious minorities (see also Koopmans et al. 2005; Statham and Tillie 2016). The interviews we have analysed indicate that the socio-political environment is also important in shaping the psychological strategies young Somalis use vis-à-vis Somalis in Somalia and in the diaspora. The participants in both countries use the same psychological strategies to deal with the hierarchies that position them in relation to their peers back 'home' (separation) and to other Somalis in the diaspora (social competition). They reinforce the differences between themselves from these groups by referring to life and politics in Britain and Sweden. For instance, they refer to the different customs between Somalia and Britain/Sweden and acknowledge that they do not fully fit in their 'home'

country. Also, they refer to British multiculturalism or to Swedish integration policies to emphasise their authentic Somali identity compared to their peers in the diaspora. Future research into minorities' social identities ought to acknowledge the interplay between psychological strategies and socio-political environment and attempt to understand how and why the context in which a group lives influences its members social psychology and identification.

This study has broader implications too. If we are to gauge young migrants' aspirations and expectations to be part of the society where they live, the analysis of their social identity and which factors influence it, is a valid start. To understand how young migrants construct their social identity could allow us to better appreciate the degree to which young migrants feel supported or constrained by older generations, and how they deal with this. Further, a study of social identity could lead to a better understanding of how (and if) young migrants strike a balance between identifying with their place of origin and the place of residence. Whether these constructions would be accepted by the majority society cannot be assumed, and the current anti-immigrant political climate in Britain and Sweden does not bode for optimism. The findings of this paper suggest that the lack of recognition of one's identification with the majority society does not necessarily lead to an increased identification with the country of origin, as in the Swedish case. Nor does the identification with the majority society necessarily lead to their social and political separation from the people in their country of origins, as we have seen among British Somalis. Instead, it seems that these referent groups are always present in the cognitive horizon of young Somalis who try to uphold their social identity in relation to all of them. This finding has political implications. Critics of multiculturalism sometimes point to minority group's antagonism to and separation from the majority society and put the burden of responsibility on minorities' own lack of integration and excessive attachment to the country of origin. This article shows that minority group members' own conceptualisation of their social identity is much more complex than these critical voices recognise.

7. References

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TABLES

	Total population	Foreign born (% of tot population)	Residents of Somali origin (% of foreign born population)
United Kingdom (2011)	56,075,912	7.961.000 (12.5%)	99.484 (1.2%)
Sweden (2016)	9.995.153	1.784.497 (17.8%)	95.960 (2.3%)

Table 1, Demographic characteristics of Sweden and the UK. (ONS 2012; SCB)

	Malmö		Ealing	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Interviews	4	2	4	7
Focus groups	17	9	-	-
	Tot N: 43			

Table 2, Sample's demographics